

**SEX AND GENDER DIFFERENTIATION IN
HILDEGARD OF BINGEN AND EDITH STEIN**

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Two German women philosophers, separated in time by eight centuries, raised fundamental questions about sex and gender differentiation in human beings. Their efforts are particularly valuable for contemporary thought in the following three areas: 1) in the kinds of questions they asked, 2) in the methods they used to answer these questions, and 3) in the relatively balanced views of man and woman they supported by their answers. The theories of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Edith Stein (1892-1942) provide an historical basis from which to develop a contemporary theory of the respective identities of woman and man.¹

A few considerations of the differences in the background experience of the two thinkers are in order here. Hildegard had her empirical research formed in part through her work as a physician-nurse in the hospice associated with her monastery; her intellectual judgments, on the other hand, were formulated as a result of her extensive study of sources in her monastic library.² Hildegard, whose work was formed within the framework of medieval cosmology and pre-Scholastic categories, was also somewhat limited by this framework and by a lack of consciousness of how historical and sociological factors influence gender identity.³ Edith Stein had her empirical research formed in part through her work as a

nurse in a hospital for wounded soldiers during World War I; her intellectual judgments through her formation in the German university system through which she gained a Ph.D., and in particular through her study of the works of Edmund Husserl and St. Thomas Aquinas.⁴ Edith Stein, whose work was formed within the framework of phenomenology and post-Scholastic categories, approached issues of sex and gender within the limitations of the method and categories of her education.⁵ These factors may make some of the specific views of Hildegard and Stein seem a little dated to the contemporary reader.

In addition, reflections on sex and gender differentiation are scattered throughout the works of both authors in an unsystematic manner and without identifying the priority of particular premises or conclusions.⁶ In spite of these concerns, and especially because there is a need to bring together in a systematic way the insights of these two important authors who gave so much thought to questions of sex and gender differentiation, I will attempt to elaborate a cohesive structure within which to consider their views even though this may leave out the rich seminal process of the development of their thought.⁷

In 1932 Edith Stein, in "Problems of Women's Education," described the human being as having a "graded structure" in which each lower grade is incorporated and integrated into relatively higher grades of organization.⁸ These structures are derived from a study of the corporeal, psychic, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of the human being. When the question of sex and gender

differentiation is raised in the context of the study of the human being, these levels of graded structure may be considered within the framework of methods found in traditional academic disciplines. Stein, herself, decided to study woman from the multiple perspectives found in different academic disciplines.⁹ Accordingly, this article will be divided into the loose hierarchy of four areas of study which she identified as Natural Sciences, Liberal Arts (including the Social Sciences) and Philosophy.¹⁰

Sex Differentiation According to the "Natural Sciences"

Hildegard of Bingen, obviously, did not have the benefit of modern scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, she approached sex differentiation through the levels of analysis similar to those found today in physics, chemistry, and biology.¹¹ Working within the limits of a medieval conception of science, she asked whether sexual differentiation could be found at the most elementary level of organization.¹² Accepting a theory of four fundamental elements, previously identified by the Greek philosopher Empedocles, she asked how these elements might relate to the respective identities of woman and man. Her question is significant, because within traditional medieval cosmology, derived from the Aristotelian tradition, the hierarchy of elements, or fire, air, water, and earth, had been interpreted in such a way that the male emerged as the privileged type. In this view the two highest elements, fire and air, are found in greater amounts in the male, and the two lowest elements were greater in the female. Hildegard introduces a

balance into the distribution of the elements. According to her, the highest and lowest elements (fire and earth) are found in greater quantities in the male, while the two middle elements (air and water) are present in the female.¹³

The evidence that Hildegard introduces to support her claims is usually "mixed" because it combines axiological and empirical information where today such information would be distinguished. For example, Hildegard offers a theological rationale for the relations of the elements to gender, namely the creation of Adam from the earth, and Eve from the flesh. At the same time she associates, as a result of her empirical observations, the primary sexual characteristic of childbearing with air, and secondary sexual characteristics (a male's beard, for example), with earth and fire.¹⁴ Hildegard also claims that the 'female element air' tempers the character and leads it to self control. Consequently, an ideal man would have a strong amount of this female element to temper the predominance of fire in his nature.¹⁵

If Chemistry is the science that considers a higher level of organization composed of fundamental particles identified by Physics, then Hildegard describes the "chemistry" of sex and gender when she analyzes the function of the four humours (phlegm, blood, choler, and black bile) which were composed of the elements previously identified.¹⁶ Hildegard raises interesting questions about sex differentiation when she wonders how the balance of the different humours effects men and women. She claims that women have more humours, and in particular more of the humour blood, than do

men."¹⁷ This preponderance of blood in women occurs in part because females have a greater balance of the element water.

More interesting, perhaps, is Hildegard's question about the relation of humours to character. Just as contemporary scientists might ask questions about the effect of different hormones on human behaviour, Hildegard analogously considers how bodily "chemicals," or the four humours within a particular type of woman or man, might relate to such characteristic themes as aggression, depression, skin tone, and sense of well being.¹⁸

At the biological level, which concerns itself with understanding the ways in which living organisms organize the lower levels of elements and compounds, Hildegard explores the way in which reproduction functions. We find her introducing a sexual balance into a context of Western theory which had devalued the female contribution to the process of generation. While Hildegard agrees that only the male deposits fertile seed, she claims that the female warms it, and through the four humours strengthens the seed "until the human form develops out of it."¹⁹ Hildegard also asks how different kinds of blood in men might be related to the character of children produced through their seed. Anticipating, perhaps, questions of genetic disposition towards certain diseases or behaviour patterns, Hildegard answers these questions through the limited concepts of medieval science.

Hildegard also explores how menopause affects different kinds of women. Her questions probe not only biological disease patterns but also mental illnesses. In addition, she wonders how physical,

chemical, and biological aspects of a woman's identity influence behaviour and character. In these kinds of questions she considers issues that move into ranges associated in contemporary science with physiology. Finally, Hildegard questions the variety of ways in which men and women interact with one another, and considers how these interpersonal dynamics relate to physical, chemical, and biological aspects of human identity.²⁰

In a short article, it is not possible to consider in depth the quality of Hildegard's answers to the questions she raised. However, by summarizing them in the charts below, it is possible to grasp the richness of the range of her intellect and to appreciate her approach to questions concerning the simultaneous complexity and unity of the human being.²¹

Hildegard's Approach to Sex Differentiation through natural science

Perspectives	male	human	female
"physics"	more of elements fire and earth	elements of fire, air, water, and earth	more of elements air and water
"chemistry"	less humours	humours of phlegm, blood, choler, and black bile	more humours
"biology"	deposits fertile seed	reproduces itself as living organism	warms and strengths seed to termination

In addition to her differentiation of males from females, Hildegard also asks whether or not there were general kinds of structures of men and of women that could be developed as a theory of types.

Hildegard's Four Types of Women

Type I Type II Type III Type IV

muscular structure	very heavy	moderately heavy	delicate	meagre
blood	clean, red	whiter	drier	slimy
colour of skin	clear and white	sullen	pale	dark
fertility	moderate	very	partial	rare
menses	light	moderate	heavy	very heavy
character	artistic, content	efficient, masculine, strict	intellectual, benevolent, loyal, chaste	unstable, ill-humoured
possible diseases after early menopause	depression, melancholy, side pains, unhealthy glandular secretions	insanity, problems with spleen, dropsy, tumours	paralysis, unbalanced, liver problems, cancer	abdominal pains, spinal sprains, early death
attitude towards men	charming and healthy when with men	driven by sexual desire for men	loyal but can not keep men's interest	happier without men

Hildegard's Four Types of Men

Type I Type II Type III Type IV

blood	fiery	fiery and airy	airy and black bile	weak in all respects
colour of skin	red hue	mixed red and white hue	sombre	unclean and pale
fertility	very	moderate	partial	infertile
character	hearty and hale	balanced	very dangerous, no moderation	weak, effeminate
children	tend to be unrestrained, course-mannered	balanced, happy, well-mannered	mean or evil children	no children
attitude towards women	treat women like sex objects	honourable and fruitful relations with women	physically abusive of and hateful towards women	indifferent towards women

In spite of the appearance of biological determinism that her analysis of elements, humours, and types seems to support, Hildegard defends the claim that a man or woman has free will. She states that "reason comes into flower" in relation to bodily organs, so "we can gather up our free will and all our discipline so that we can master the attacks of the other humours and complete our action in a disciplined way."²² The introduction of free will shifts the focus of analysis away from the natural sciences to a higher level of organization within the human being, or the level in which consciousness and the psyche play a fundamental part. That is, through a conscious exercise of free choice, an individual may act in relation to his or her physical and bio-chemical identity. To understand this concept of freedom, it is necessary to move to the next level of the analysis of sex and gender differentiation.

Sex and Gender Differentiation According to the Liberal Arts and "Social Sciences"

At this point, the work of Edith Stein may be introduced into our analysis. Edith Stein's analysis goes far beyond that of her predecessor in its attention to the ways in which education and socialization affect the historical development of gender, in its attention to the approaches of different academic disciplines to the study of sex and gender, and in its questioning of the presuppositions of traditional categories when applied to issues of sex and gender. For example, Stein considers what different disciplines could bring to the study of man's and woman's identity. She asks how physiology differs from experimental psychology and

from humanistic psychology and again how these disciplines could be distinguished from sociology and anthropology²³ Instead of the generally mixed approach we found with Hildegard, with Stein we find a consciousness of the importance of distinguishing separate disciplines and then viewing the subject again through an interdisciplinary approach. At the same time we also find in her work a commitment to considering the person as a complete whole. Common to all of these disciplines, suggests Edith Stein, is the way in which "the *psychic* life conceived as a *uniform whole*... can neither be separated into its component parts nor reassembled into them."²⁴

The psychological approach to the human being reflects a higher order of organization than that found in the natural sciences because it includes reference to consciousness, or the psyche, and to self-consciousness as well.²⁵ An example of this developmental aspect of the history of thought is evident in a consideration of the typology introduced above by Hildegard. The medieval thinker simply uses a theory of typology without reflecting on its validity. Edith Stein, on the other hand, raises questions about the way in which typology relates to a psychology of the individual.²⁶ In addition to stating why she thinks a typology can be useful in areas of gender study, she also warns against its abuse, noting a "danger of taking the types as it finds them in each case to be something inflexible and permanent."²⁷

Edith Stein considers many different types of men and women in her essays. She refers to human types differentiated by class, age,

sex, occupation, station, nationality, and generation.²⁸ In addition, within the category of woman, she refers to five types of young girl.²⁹ From the stand point of the present considerations, we find of greater interest the questions she raises about types in general and the subsequent application of these questions to her fundamental gender types "masculine" and "feminine." Stein considers:

Which types *deserve* to be preserved? Which types need a specific educational program in order to change them? And which types can be set up as models, i.e. types into which we can try and ought to try to change the existing ones?³⁰

This approach allows Stein to question a classical differentiation of types which associated the masculine type with strength and the feminine type with weakness. For example, Hildegard often uses phrases such as 'manly virility,' 'feminine weakness' and 'soft womanly weakness.'³¹ She describes herself as "a tender and fragile rib" and "more than wretched in my existence as a woman."³² Edith Stein, on the other hand, was highly critical of this sort of attitude. She states, "There is still a multitude of thoughtless people satisfied with hackneyed expressions concerning the *weaker sex* or even the *fair sex*."³³ Hildegard and Stein accept a common belief that males, in the order of nature, are superior to females in some respects, although both authors believed that this relation was inverted in the order of grace, so that through faith women often appeared to have an advantage. At the same time as these theorists appeared to accept some grounds for a sex polarity which privileged the male, they also sought to

shift the emphasis to a complementarity in many areas of their theory. This shift is particularly evident in their analysis of the psychic life of men and women.

Both Hildegard and Stein are in agreement on a key aspect of a typology of masculine and feminine, namely that a man has both masculine and feminine characteristics and a woman has both masculine and feminine characteristics, although the relation of men and women to these characteristics is gender determined. If a person is male, then a more natural relation to the masculine and a more socialized aspect to the feminine characteristics is exhibited; while if a person is female, there is a more natural relation to feminine and a more socialized aspect to masculine characteristics. In the following chart, those specifically masculine and feminine characteristics noted by their positive and negative forms are summarized.³⁴

Stein's Types of Gender Differentiation

positive - feminine - negative		positive - masculine - negative	
tendency towards union	urge to lose the self in another human being	tendency towards detachment	brutal despotism over others and especially women
dedication towards developing others to completion	too much curiosity about others	dedication to a discipline	enslavement to work
orientation towards concrete whole person	placing too much emphasis on self or own family	orientation towards specialization	atrophy of one's humanity
special capacity for empathy	an inability to accept criticism without seeing it as an attack	special capacity for objectivity	degeneracy of too much abstraction

One limitation in Stein's analysis, which is also evident in Hildegard's listing of characteristics of different types of men and women, is the lack of prioritization in their works. There is no attempt to identify which masculine or feminine characteristics are closer than other characteristics to the identity of a male or female. Subsequent research on sex and gender needs to consider each different aspect identified by these two theorists, and to consider carefully the degree of closeness to nature and the effects of socialization before more definitive judgements can be made about the accuracy of the insights offered. At the same time, Hildegard and Edith Stein should be recognized as among the first writers to give serious attention to this area of sex and gender identity. They have elaborated a constructive starting point for those of us who are interested in continuing this kind of research.

Hildegard of Bingen implies in her works that a man could have feminine characteristics and a woman masculine ones in both the positive and negative senses.³⁵ Edith Stein explicitly states this claim:

Man and woman have the same basic human traits, although this or that trait predominates not only in the sexes but also in respective individuals. Therefore, women may closely approximate the masculine type and conversely.³⁶

In fact, Stein argues that girls who appear to neglect the development of masculine characteristics should be educated in abstract subjects such as mathematics and metaphysics, and men should develop the capacity for empathy.³⁷ In fact, one fundamental

set of questions raised in her works concerns the relation between sexual differentiation in the body, gender differentiation in masculine and feminine characteristics, and the role of men and women to build up society.

Does the difference between man and woman involve the whole structure of the person or only the body and those psychic functions necessarily related to physical organs? Can the mind be considered unaffected by this difference?...If...the difference does involve the person's entire structure, then educational work must consider the specific structure of the masculine and feminine mind. Furthermore, if the nature of each individual contains both masculine and feminine elements and if only one of these elements is predominant in each person, would not individuals of both *species* then be needed to represent perfectly the human species as a whole? Could it not be fully represented by one individual?³⁸

Answers that are proposed to these questions reveal the extent to which Edith Stein views the person as a completely integrated being. She argues that the particular structure of the female body makes it oriented towards supporting new life growing within it during pregnancy.³⁹ This characteristic becomes the fundamental axis of her theory of woman's identity. Even though Stein's essays focus more specifically on women, the premise that a man's identity contains a similar kind of unity is implied. The detachment of seed in the reproductive function in the male is the corporeal structure that gives a natural tendency in the male towards similar psychic, intellectual, and spiritual orientation towards detachment. It is important to note that Stein is not suggesting a biological determinism here.⁴⁰ She believes, however, that in order to grasp

the essential reason for the relationship of body and psyche, it is necessary to move to a still higher level of organization of the human being, and this level is more properly approached through philosophy. Stein claims: "the problems of philosophy begin where the work of positive sciences leave off."⁴¹

Sex and Gender Differentiation according to Philosophy

Edith Stein claims that while psychology examines consciousness and the psyche through personal experience and empirical observation, philosophy seeks the interior principle of the organization of the whole human being through exercising the function of "cognition."⁴² This function seeks to uncover a permanence of structure that persists through changes. Stein considers whether or not there is any permanent structure of the female or male that persists through the variable types mentioned above. If a permanence in structure can be identified, then this constitutes an "inner form." If an inner form exists, then it delineates what Stein calls a "species." Genera is divided into species: "...that is, every basic mould of being is divided into its subordinate mould."⁴³ The cognitive task of philosophy is "to expound on species."⁴⁴

In the case of the "human species" the inner form is called the soul, and the structure of the species involves a conjugate "lived-body-soul" which is always existentially unified, and separable only through cognition.⁴⁵ In her pre-Scholastic vocabulary, Hildegard of Bingen also emphasizes the unity of the

human being. Employing metaphorical language, she describes the function of soul as the organizing principle of the human being. In one text she depicts the soul as "wandering everywhere" through the body "like a caterpillar spinning silk."⁴⁶ In other texts, she suggests that the soul acts in the human being in the same way in which "a bee forms honey in its comb" or "the soul flows through the body like sap through a tree."⁴⁷ In addition to the metaphors she uses to stress the integral unity of soul and body, Hildegard also explicitly states that the soul is the principle of the organization of the human body. It "gives life to the body," and it "rules the whole body as its foundation," it understands, it senses, it leads the person into action through the exercise of the will, and it is responsible for reasoning.⁴⁸ In her post-Scholastic vocabulary Edith Stein defends the same point of view without using metaphors, but by stating simply that the lived-body-soul is a unified organized structure of informed matter in the individual human being.⁴⁹

While Hildegard's analysis of soul considers only the human species, Edith Stein raises the further question of whether or not there might be subspecies identified as "species of woman" and "species of man." She claims: "It is quite clear that the species is the core of all questions concerning *woman*."⁵⁰ Stein was not the first to consider this possibility, for Aristotle had asked the same thing in *Metaphysics* X,9: "One might raise the question, why woman does not differ from man in species, when female and male are contrary and their difference is a contrariety."⁵¹ Because

Aristotle thought that the female was a privation of the male, he concluded that women did not constitute different species from man, but rather that the human form was in the female in an imperfect manner.

Stein rejects this solution to the problem of how to explain the permanence of difference between men and women, presumably because it rested on a premise of an essential natural inferiority of the female.⁵² She concludes that the inner form which determines structure, or soul, in woman is different from the inner form, or soul in man, not in respect to their equal participation in the human species, but in their participation in a complement subspecies. In the following passage we find Stein identifying the main areas in which this difference of interior structure can be studied:

I am convinced that the species *humanity* embraces the double species *man* and *woman*. That the essence of the complete *human* being is characterized by this duality; and that the entire structure of the essence demonstrates the specific character. There is a difference, not only in body structure and in particular physiological functions, but also in the entire corporeal life. The relationship of soul and body is different in man and woman; the relation of soul to body differs in their psychic life as well as that of the spiritual faculties to each other. The feminine [female human] species expresses a unity and wholeness of the total psychosomatic personality and a harmonious development of faculties. The masculine [male human] species strives to enhance individual abilities in order that they may attain their highest achievements.⁵³

This paragraph contains the core of Edith Stein's analysis of the separate species of woman and of man. It implies that differences

between a man and a woman are not accidental, but essential to their respective identities.⁵⁴ It is important to note that Stein's theory has a three-fold level of analysis: species of humanity, sub-species of woman and of man, and sub-category of individuality. The latter category, or individuality, is crucial to her philosophy, because through it an individual person, as a real existent, forms a particular identity as a man or a woman which is oriented, but not bound, by characteristics identified as masculine or feminine.⁵⁵

The chart below summarizes the content of Stein's theory of the three levels of human identity:

Stein's philosophy of Species⁵⁶

HUMAN SPECIES

SPECIES OF WOMAN

SPECIES OF MAN

female structure: 1. soul more intensely connected to all parts of the body; 2. female corporeal structure of the body oriented towards supporting growth of new life within as mother	lived-body-soul unity female/male structure	male structure: 1. soul more detached from parts of the body; 2. male corporeal structure of the body oriented towards reproducing by detachment of seed as father
feminine structure: 1. receives world inwardly through emotions and more affected inwardly by the lived experience of the body; 2. intellect judges world received emotionally through comprehension of value of existent in its totality 3. will emphasizes personal and holistic choices	faculties: sensitive (emotions) intellect will feminine/masculine structure	masculine structure: 1. receives world through intellect and less affected by the lived experience of the body; 2. intellect judges the world received intellectually in a compartmentalized way; 3. will emphasizes exterior, specialized choices
feminine professions: nursing, social work, education, holistic medicine, including also gynaecology and paediatrics, governess, translator, editor, research in humanities and arts, bureaucratic work, administration, and politics	Individual professional work woman/man structure	masculine professions: factory work, hard physical labour in industry, trade, and agriculture, business, national or municipal service, technology, trade, legislature, chemistry, mathematics, theoretical physics, clerical work, administration, natural science, philosophy, and specialized medicine

Two important points about this analysis of species need to be made: the first concerns the freedom of the individual to develop a unique personal identity, and the second concerns the value for society of the complementary identities of women and men. Stein is adamant that individuals can freely choose to develop characteristics different from the ones to which they have a natural attraction through the different structure of their lived-body-soul inner form. In one context she states: "And who would deny the intellect and will of girls? That would be questioning their full humanity."⁵⁷ Or conversely, a man can, through free actions of the will either surrender to or reject emotional stimulations or interior and exterior formative influences.⁵⁸ Human life is always individual, and therefore, actions within it can express varying degrees of freedom.

In addition, even though a permanence of inner form and structure is identified in the concept of human species, or species of woman and species of man, Stein argues that species is a developmental concept. Consequently, the inner form gives a certain starting point to the structure, but the determination of the individual life by the free man or woman offers a wide range of possibilities which are much broader than the starting point:

the species does not come about in ready-made form at the beginning of existence; rather, the individual develops progressively in a process dependent on time. This process is not unequivocally predetermined but depends rather on several variable factors, among others, on man's freedom which enables him to work towards his own formation and that of others.⁵⁹

This means that the individual woman has an interior structure that can be characterized as the nexus {woman-female-feminine and masculine}, and the individual man has an interior structure that can be characterized as the nexus {man-male-masculine and feminine}. As the individual freely works within a dual species of human and either as man or woman, he or she continues to unfold, through free acts, the temporal development of a particular sub species from complementary male or female starting points. Stein concludes: "the species *man* and *woman* are also fully realized only in the total course of human development."⁶⁰

Concerning the second point mentioned above, Edith Stein does not imply that women ought to practice only feminine professions or men masculine professions. She states clearly: "...there is no profession which cannot be practised by a woman."⁶¹ In fact, she argues more strongly that it would be very good for society in general if women moved into areas which had been predominately held by men previously. She concludes: "Thus the participation of women in the most diverse professional disciplines could be a blessing for the entire society, private or public, precisely if the specifically feminine ethos would be preserved."⁶² By 'feminine ethos' she means the tendency to look towards the holistic, to be concerned with the development of people, to practice empathy as a genuine ground for inter-subjectivity, and so forth. In another example, Stein ponders the "great sickness of our time" which she identifies as an "inner disunion, a complete deficiency of set convictions and strong principles, an aimless drifting." She goes

on to argue that "only whole human beings as we have described them are immune to the contemporary sickness." Then she concludes: "Consequently, when women themselves are once again whole persons and when they help others to become so, they create healthy, energetic spores supplying healthy energy to the entire national body."⁶³ One of the ways a woman can move towards this integral wholeness is by educating herself in part through traditional masculine disciplines such as the natural sciences or philosophy, at the same time as she becomes more conscious of her own natural orientation towards feminine values.

The task for an individual woman or an individual man, then, becomes one of freely developing the self within a double species of human-man or human-woman. Philosophy provides the cognitive framework of inner structures within which this temporal activity can take place. If Hildegard of Bingen and Edith Stein are correct in holding that the human being is an integral entity of lived-body-soul, and if Stein is also correct in supposing that there is a difference in inner form in the male human being and female human being which unfolds within this unity, then it would follow that there are definite characteristics of this difference which provide fundamentally different starting points for the development of individual identity in a particular woman or a particular man.

The empirical sciences, limited as they are to describing external behaviour, cannot identify these characteristics. Stein states directly: "statistics are of little help" in determining what is truly female and male or feminine and masculine.⁶⁴

Moreover, since women have masculine characteristics and men feminine characteristics, it is not possible to reach an understanding of the interior structure of the male or female person by an empirical methodology alone.⁶⁵ The cognition of this inner structure of a species woman and a species man may only be discovered through a thinking process proper to philosophy.

Again it is worth noting, that although Edith Stein has begun to identify particular characteristics as masculine and others as feminine, and in addition, although she has also sought to show a link between these characteristics and the inner structure of the male and female human being, her analysis stops short of prioritizing the characteristics in degrees of essential relationship to man's and woman's identity. This careful analysis still needs to be done, and it is a central task for contemporary research on sex and gender to consider. This research is particularly important in a contemporary philosophical context which is often influenced by a Cartesian approach to the person in which the mind and body are separated, and the centre of the self is located in a sexless rational ego. In addition, post-Modernism, which further undermines a theory of the integral unity of the human being by denying even a centre of the self, has as one of its aims the dismissal of essential sex and gender characteristics altogether. One of the effects of this Cartesian and post-Modern mentality is the impression that masculine or feminine characteristics are completely socially constructed and that they have no relationship to the corporeal structure of the human being.

Edith Stein's analysis directly challenges this assumption. Since the foundation of her philosophy is the assumption of the integral unity of the human being as a lived-body-soul entity, it would seem that any philosophy which also accepts this premise, would be well served by a serious investigation of her claims.

Sister Prudence Allen, RSM. PhD
 Professor- Department of Philosophy
 Principal-Lonergan University College
 Concordia University, Montreal

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2. For background information on Hildegard see the following: Francesa Maria Steele, *The Life and Visions of St. Hildegard* (London: Heath, Cranton and Ousely, 1914), Charles Singer, *From Magic to Science: Essays on the Scientific Twilight* (London: Benn, 1928); and Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University Press, 1984), Chapt. 6; and Werner Lauter, *Hildegard-Bibliographie* (Alzey: Verlag der Rheinhes, 1970-1984).
3. Bernard W. Scholz, "Hildegard Von Bingen on the Nature of Woman," *American Benedictine Review* 31.4 (1980): 361-383.
4. Edith Stein describes her experiences working as a nurse in an Austrian medical facility of four-thousand beds for soldiers wounded or afflicted with disease during World War I in Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family: 1891-1916* eds. Dr. L. Gelber and Romanaeus Leuven, OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1986), 318-367. While Hildegard's nursing experience was primarily of natural diseases of women, and Edith Stein's of surgery for trauma, and diseases such as typhoid in men, it is clear that both philosophers considered the human body to have a formative role on gender identity. See also, Sabina Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098-1179: A Visionary Life* (London and New York: Routledge), 80-105.

5. See, Erich Przybara, "Germany," *The Modern Schoolman* X.4 (May, 1993):91-2 for a discussion of Stein's relation to neo-Scholasticism; James Collins, "Edith Stein and the Advance of Phenomenology," *Thought* XII.64 (March, 1942):685-708; Hilda Graef, *The Scholar and the Cross: The Life and Work of Edith Stein* (Westminster, Maryland, 1955); and Josef Stallmach, "The work of Edith Stein: The Tension Between Knowledge and Faith," *Communio* 15 (1988):376-383.

6. While Hildegard's reflections on woman's identity are found spread throughout her writings, Edith Stein's are focused in a series of eight different lectures she gave between 1928 and 1932 and which were brought together into one text *Die Frau* in 1959, then translated as *Essays on Women* in 1987.

7. A preliminary remark needs to be made about vocabulary used in this article. The word "sex" will be used to refer primarily to the biological aspects of male and female identity; while "gender" will be used to emphasize the psycho-social aspects of male and female, and masculine and feminine identity within a man or a woman. Although this usage has a danger of fragmenting the human being in that it separates the biological from the psycho-social aspects of human identity, it will be adopted because it is in accordance with contemporary North-American practice at the present time, but with all due reservation concerning its somewhat limited applicability. The term "complementarity" is used to refer to the theory that man and woman are significantly different but fundamentally equal in dignity and worth. For the philosophical background of this theory of complementarity, see, Sister Prudence Allen, RSM, "Integral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion," *Communio* 17 (Winter, 1990): 523-543.

8. "Inasmuch as all lower grades are contained in man's structure of being, he occupies a place peculiar to him in this graded structure. His body is a *material body*, but not *only* that. Rather at the same time, it is an *organism* which is formed and activated from within. Again, man is not *only* an organism but rather an *organism with a soul* who, in the sensitive manner peculiar to him, is open to himself and his environment. And finally, he is a *spiritual being* who is consciously cognizant of himself and others. All this belongs to the *human species*, and whatever does not evidence this structure of being cannot be termed a *human being*. Edith Stein, "Problems of Women's Education," *Essays on Women*, eds. Dr. L. Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publication, 1987), 172. The italics are Stein's emphasis. This approach to the human being was also developed by Bernard Lonergan in his 1957 text *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 470. He claimed: "...at any stage of his development a man is an individual, existing unity differentiated by physical, chemical, organic, psychic, and intellectual conjugates." See also, 205-6, 255, 451, and 498.

9. Stein, "Problems," 163-171.
10. Stein and Hildegard also include Theology as the most inclusive of the hierarchy of academic disciplines. This area I consider, with the philosophical, in an article of the same title forthcoming in *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Vol. XX, no.2, (summer 1993).
11. It is possible to differentiate hierarchically three natural sciences along the following lines: Physics searches for the most elementary (sub-atomic) particles in the universe; Chemistry studies the properties and reactions of atoms and compounds; and Biology studies the properties of living organisms.
12. Hildegard explored scientific areas outside of questions of sex differentiation as well. Her work on stones, astronomy, herbs, and on the healing arts testifies to her interest in an empirical approach to the world. See, *Liber Simplicis Medicinæ*, known also as *Physica*, and chapter iv translated into German as *Das Buch von den Steinen* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1979; *Liber Compositæ Medicinæ* known also as *Causa et Curae* and translated into German as *Heilkunde: das Buch von dem Grund und Wesen der Heilung der Krankheiten* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1957), especially chapter iii (about the Four elements, Fire, Air, Water, and Earth); and *Liber Divinorum Operum*, known also as *De Operatione Dei* and translated into English as *Book of Divine Works* (Sante Fe: Bear and Company, 1987). The original Latin works are found in J. B. Pitra, ed. *Analecta Sanctae Hildegardis* (1882), vol. 8; and J.P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus: series latina*, (1841-1864), vol. 197. Scholz states that Hildegard "devoted the years from 1150-1157 to the study of nature." 364.
13. Today scientists would claim that elementary sub-atomic or atomic particles have no sex differentiated aspects either in isolation or in relation to one another.
14. Hildegard, *Heilkunde* 124, 93. Translated by Jasmin el Kordi Schmidt as are all subsequent passages from this text.
15. Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, 139-40.
16. Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, 125. An imbalance or excess of one of the humours could lead to illness or death. See also Flanagan, 96-102.
17. Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, 143.
18. Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, 139-145.
19. This is significant because Aristotelian theory had argued that the female's impotence was due to the fact that she had less heat than the male. Presumably this followed from the lesser amount of

the element 'fire.' For Hildegard, potency was due to the greater amount of the element 'earth' in the male. See, *Heilkunde*, 125.

20. Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, 138-150.

21. For further detail, see Prudence Allen, RSM, "Hildegard of Bingen's Philosophy of Sex Identity," *Thought* LXIV (September 1989): 231-241.

22. Hildegard of Bingen, *Divine Works*, Part I, Vision Three:12, 71. See also: "In the humours there blooms also the gift of reason so that human beings know what they have to do and must not do...In this way we human beings preserve our sense of reverence and discipline by restraining the impulse of the other humours and bringing our actions under control," 60.

23. Today questions from these disciplines concerning sex and gender identity range from a consideration of the relation of right and left brain functions in men and women, to sex role stereotypes, to inculturation of masculine and feminine characteristics.

24. Edith Stein, "Problems," 165.

25. Hildegard anticipated this in her work when she analyzed the interactive dynamics of different kinds of men and women. For example, she described the different lived experiences of a woman who is stared at by a man who turns her into a sex object or a man who is a friend: "The eyes of such men can meet squarely with those of the women, much in contrast to those other men's eyes that were fixed on them like arrows." *Heilkunde*, 138. Stein, on the other hand, often referred to examples described by great writers in the Liberal Arts such as Goethe, Sigrid Undset, or Ibsen. "Spirituality," 87-97. Personal experience and works of literature provide early resources for the later more systematic study of gender through the social sciences.

26. Stein, "Problems," 166. "First, every description of an individual must also deal with the concept of his type because the individual as such cannot be understood abstractly. Secondly, definite types are brought into relief by the evidence under study; the structural context is neither simply universal (the same with all beings, without any differentiation), nor is it simply individual (singular to each one, without being common to all.) Third, the types are of practical importance for the methods used in education and medicine; hence the feminine type or a diversity of feminine types is respectively encountered here."

27. Stein, "Problems," 166. See also, 176. Presumably the same positive and negative aspects of a theory of types would be found in contemporary psychological theory such as in Freudian, Jungian, or Transactional analysis.

28. Stein, "Problems," 162, and *On the Problem of Empathy* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1987), 115.

29. Stein, "Problems," Her list includes: maternal type, erotic type, level-headed type, romantic type, and intellectual type in addition to the broader category "mixed-types." She also adds: "types are not to be regarded as naturally given facts which are rigid and unchangeable," 176.

30. Stein, "Problems," 177.

31. *Hildegard of Bingen: Scivias*, Trans. Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), Book Three, Vision 5:13, 377. See also, *Hildegard, Scivias*, Trans. Bruce Hozeski, (Sante Fe, New Mexico: Bear and Company, 1986), 234. For an evaluation of this aspect of Hildegard see. Barbara Newman, "Divine Power Made Perfect in Weakness: St. Hildegard on the Frail Sex," *Medieval Religious Women: Peaceweavers*, Vol. Two, eds. Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols (Cistercian Publications Inc., 1987): 103-122.

32. Hildegard, *Scivias*, Book Two, Vision 1, 149; and *Book*, 271. See also Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley/ Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989) where she points out that Hildegard uses her 'weakness' as a medium for the strength of God.

33. Stein, "Problems," 144.

34. Stein, "Spirituality of Christian Women," in *Essays*, 93-94 and 112-113; "Problems," 178-180 and 207; "Woman's Value in National Life," in *Essays*, 148-9 and 251; and *Empathy*. Stein is careful to note that she is not giving an exhaustive list, but rather a selective list of characteristics. She states: "During the last few decades psychology has been much occupied with the psychical differences between the sexes; certainly, experiment and statistics have not revealed much more than what ordinary experience already teaches. I would like to emphasize only two criteria differentiating man from woman from those which are usually mentioned since they have particular significance in helping us understand the intrinsic value of woman.", "Woman's Value," 248.

35. For example, she called St. Bernard, "Gentle father, mildest of men," and approved of the second type of woman who had a "masculine nature." See, *Book*, 272 and *Heilkunde*, 145. Also see, Newman concerning Hildegard's attacks on an "effeminate age," 238-249.

36. Stein, "Problems," 179. See also, "Principles of Women's Education," in *Essays*, 118.

37. Stein, "Principles," 123-4, "Problems," 210-3, and *Empathy*, 116. Empathy is described as the "basis of inter-subjective experience," because it enables a person to transfer the self into another person's orientation by the exercise of an ability to grasp real analogies." *Empathy*, 63-4. Persons are able to exercise empathy with those who are like them as well as with others who have "differently composed personal structures." *Empathy*, 69. According to Edith Stein, women have a more natural relation to empathy. She refers to "the mother's more sensitive faculty of empathy," and to a "specifically feminine manner of empathy," which considers the other person as a concrete and whole being. "Problems," 207 and "Spirituality," 112-3.

38. Stein, "Problems," 172-3. See, *Mulieris Dignitatem* #18 and #30.

39. This view is also echoed in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #18: "Scientific analysis fully confirms that the very physical constitution of woman is naturally disposed to motherhood---conception, pregnancy and giving birth...What the different branches of science have to say on this subject is important and useful, provided that it is not limited to an exclusively biophysiological interpretation of woman and motherhood."

40. See, Stein, "Problems," 144-5, where she refers derisively to the "brutal attitude which considers woman merely from the biological point of view;" and "Ethos of Women's Professions," in *Essays*, 47, where she claims that "only subjective delusion could deny that women are capable of practising vocations other than that of spouse and mother."

41. Stein, "Problems," 167.

42. Stein, "Problems," 174.

43. Edith Stein, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein*, [138] Complete Translation in Augusta Spiegelman Gooch, *Finite and Eternal Being: Attempt at an ascent to the meaning of being*, Ph.D. Diss. University of Dallas, 1981, 197.

44. Stein, "Problems," 171. See also, 167.

45. Stein, *Endliches*, [229ff], 343ff.

46. Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, 126.

47. Hildegard, *Divine Works*, Part One, Vision Four:103, 126 and *Scivias*, Book One, Vision 4:25, 123.

48. Hildegard, *Scivias*, Book One, Vision 4:16, 119-20.

49. Stein, *Endliches*, [117ff], 166 ff and [148ff], 211ff.

50. Stein, "Problems," 162. The passage in full reads as follows: "I have spoken before of the species 'woman.' By *species* we understand a permanent category which does not change. Thomistic philosophy designates it by the term *form*, meaning an *inner form* which determines structure. The type is not unchanging in the same sense as the species. An individual can develop from one type to another. For instance, this happens in the process when the individual advances from childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood. Hence, this process is prescribed within the individual by an inner form....It is quite clear that species is the core of all questions concerning woman. If such a 'species' exists, then it cannot be modified by environmental, economic, cultural, or professional factors." See also, "Spirituality," 87-8 and 93 and "Principles," 116-7.

51. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1058a 29-31, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, (New York: Random House, 1941).

52. See, Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution* (Montreal and London: Eden Press, 1985).

53. Stein, "Problems," 177-8. The insertion of [male human] and [female human] enables a more accurate rendering of the passage, for "masculine" and "feminine" are more appropriately considered as *types* and not as *species* in Stein's theory.

54. Accidental characteristics, like colour of hair, and so forth, are in the Aristotelian model simply due to matter, and are not considered in the definition of the human being. Edith Stein is making the claim that sex and gender differentiation is not accidental but essential to the respective identities of men and women.

55. Therefore, it is the orientation of the structure that is essentially different in man and woman, not the specific content of the structure itself.

56. References to lived-body soul complex may be found in "Spirituality," 94-5 ; to the faculties in "Ethos of Women's Professions," in *Essays*, 43, "Spirituality," 94-6, 102-3, and 113-7; and to professional work in: "Spirituality," 106, 112-3; "Problems," 148 and 207; "Vocation," 81; "Value," 247-8, 256-7, and "Ethos," 43, 48-9, and especially 42, where she states "first, that certain abiding attitudes are unique to the feminine [female human] soul and form woman's professional life from within out; second, that the very nature of woman draws her to certain professions."

57. Stein, "Church, Woman and Youth," in *Essays* 238. See also "But this nature [of woman] is not uniform but varies according to types and individuals." "Problems," 150.

58. Stein, "Spirituality," 98-9.

59. Stein, "Problems," 173.
60. Stein, "Problems," 179.
61. Stein, "Ethos," 47. Stein also asks: "What does our age demand of women? First of all, it requires most of them to earn their own living." "Principles," 126.
62. Stein, "Ethos," 49. See also "Women's Values," where Stein considers a woman who enters a masculine profession and either "feels forced into conditions of life and work alien to her nature," or if she is strong enough, "she has perhaps succeeded in converting the masculine profession into a feminine one." Also, Stein describes women entering and then mastering, by changing the profession, what had previously been "masculine monopolies, 256.
63. Stein, "Woman's Value," 253.
64. Stein, "Spirituality," 109.
65. Stein, "Spirituality," 108-9.